

Winter Learning Activities for Families:

Nine Fun Activities to Do With Your Elementary School Child

Elementary school children enjoy playing make believe, being the center of attention and talking.

Take advantage of your child's "downtime" during winter break. Winter break can be an opportunity to connect, reconnect or better connect with your children. How? Just by talking, listening and playing with your child. It doesn't get much easier or more fun than that.

1. Make reading a BIG DEAL.

Your child should read every day. Some children are happy to read books. Others r variety, so give your child access to newspapers, magazines, comic books – any prin reading is fine, but make sure your child is reading and not just surfing the Internet

- Make the reading experience special by creating a space for your children t on what they've read.
- Children also enjoy copying adults, so grab something to read and share a r space with your child.
- Ask your children to read aloud to you or someone else. This will let you know how well your children are reading (does their reading flow or do they stop a lot?) and how much they understand (ask them "who, what, where and why" questions).

Tip: For students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, as well as for struggling readers, visit the video book section of the DC Public library (www.dclibrary.org/kids/videobooks).

Tumblebooks has books that are in different languages and levels to engage all readers.

At the end of the reading time, make a point of telling your children how well they read, how happy you are that they read, and that you're excited to see and hear them read more. Positive reinforcement will go a long way.



Student at Hyde-Addison
Photo by Michael DeAngelis

2. Have fun with math!

Incorporate math in everyday activities. For ideas, check out the Parent Math Guide sponsored by the National Education Foundation. Visit www.cyberlearning.org/clu_academies/ParentMathGuide.pdf



Students at Francis-Stevens EC
Photo by Bel Perez Gabilondo

3. Encourage your child to perform.

Ask your children to make up a story to tell you. It can be about anything! This is an easy way to learn what your children are thinking, what they think is funny or scary, and what they're learning.

4. Follow the leader (your child).

You also can join your children in whatever activity they are doing – playing with toys, reading a book, drawing, watching TV.

By letting your child set the pace and tone of an activity, you're fostering responsibility and leadership – skills they will use for life.

5. Be actively low key.

When possible, set aside time to turn off the TV, radio, videogames and cell phones and enjoy some "family time." This may take the form of playing a game together or just talking. Sometimes it may involve awkward periods of silence. The purpose is to reinforce a time when you and your children can connect or reconnect.

6. Celebrate Achievements and Set Goals

Talk to your children about school. Find out:

- What they love about school;
- What would they change about school; and
- What do they want to be when they grow up.

Establish and write down new goals for the remainder of the school year. everyone can see them.

- Congratulate them when they make progress.
- Encourage and support them when they face challenges.



Student at Payne ES
Photo by Michael DeAngelis

7. Explore a museum.

DC has many incredible museums and hundreds of fascinating exhibits. Museums can be a low-cost (most museums are free) way to take your children on a trip that can expose them to many new things – and spark their interests in ways that may surprise you.

8. Go to a live performance.

Live performances are listed in the local newspapers. The *Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage* has free daily performances. Want to get your child excited? You can show him or her clips from past performances. Go to www.kennedy-center.org/programs/millennium/schedule.html and click on the performers name to access those clips.

9. Take a “virtual trip.”

You might not be able to get to a museum or live performance, but there are many online opportunities that allow you to take your child on a virtual trip.

Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Renwick Gallery
(www.americanart.si.edu/education/activities/online/index.cfm)

The site provides links to various museum exhibits and includes links to interact Notables on this site:



Students at H.D. Cooke
Photo by Simona Monnatti

- **¡del Corazón! Latino Voices in American Art** is an exhibit that goes behind-the-scenes and uses photographs, videos and other resources to reveal the artists and their works. Explore each section to learn how they express universal cultural experiences.
- **Meet Me at Midnight** is an interactive art lesson and mystery for you and your child to work on together. Put together by the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, this online tour of the museum is sure to teach you and your child about select works of art and where to find them in D.C.

The National Zoo (<http://www.nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/webcams>)

If you can't get to the zoo in person, check out what the animals are doing via webcam!

Metropolitan Museum of Art (www.metmuseum.org/)

Under “Museum Kids,” you'll find [“Explore and Learn”](#) – and great online experiences for you and your child. In this section you and your child can:

- [Explore several famous pieces of art through a “sing-a-long”](#) (warning: it's a catchy tune!);
- [Learn more about the influences and methods of Vincent van Gogh](#) (there's a great surprise at the end for your budding artist);
- [Take a walk through Romare Bearden's “The Block”](#).

Museum of Science and Industry (www.msichicago.org/)

Explore some [fun and easy hands-on activities, such as](#) analyze candy using chromatography (think: “CSI: Candy”), learn how to build a lever, or make music with straws. There's also a game called [“Simple Machines,”](#) which teaches you about using simple machines such as pulleys and levers.

What other activities do you like to do with your children during the winter? Submit your ideas to <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/winter> and we'll share some of them on our website, Twitter and Facebook.